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PRESIDENT'S MEETING WITH KHRUSHCHEV
VIENNA, June 3-4, 1961

Background Paper

Soviet Aims and Expectations

Summary

Khrushchev will regard the Vienna talks as far more important than a probing of the President's views. In discussing foreign relations in general, Khrushchev will expound the Soviet line on peaceful coexistence, stressing in particular the need for both sides to avoid actions which could produce nuclear war and the thesis that the US must draw appropriate conclusions from the growth of Soviet power. He will seek specific agreements, and will expect that the conference outcome will set the pattern for Soviet diplomacy for some months to come. Khrushchev would prefer that the talks end on a note of accord, and may make some conciliatory gestures for this reason. But his attachment to this aim will depend primarily on the outcome of the talks on major issues. Probably Khrushchev's foremost aim will be to obtain some commitment to hold resumed negotiations on Berlin and Germany. Short of a categorical rejection of any further negotiations on Berlin, Khrushchev would probably be willing to accept considerably less than his optimum demands on conference arrangements. Khrushchev's approach to disarmament questions is less predictable, but the possibility of modifications in the present rigid Soviet position on a test ban agreement or general disarmament cannot be excluded.

Introduction

The Vienna talks will be the culmination of a procession of Soviet approaches-- some made as early as last November-- for a meeting between Chairman Khrushchev and President Kennedy. This record leaves little doubt of Khrushchev's keen interest in the meeting.

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The record also contains clear pointers to the topics the Soviet leader will want to discuss. He will stress the need--

- (a) to arrive at an early, negotiated "interim" settlement of the Berlin question;
- (b) to reach an understanding on various issues relating to disarmament and security,
- (c) to "slow down" the arms race,
- (d) to base US-Soviet relations on the principles of "peaceful coexistence" Soviet style, and
- (e) to expand US-Soviet trade.

Khrushchev may also invite the President to visit the Soviet Union, and despite his intimations to the contrary, may raise the questions of Cuba and Laos. And, of course, he will wish to sound out President Kennedy as a leader, to test the man against impressions and hypotheses formed by Soviet diplomats and propagandists.

While this much is clear, these matters are of such scope and elasticity that they give Khrushchev considerable leeway in deciding how to play his cards. Before examining these particulars, it is useful to analyze several trends in Soviet policy which will have a bearing on Khrushchev's approach to the conference.

Trends and Pressures in Soviet Policy

Soviet diplomacy over the past year has shown marked inconsistencies. These inconsistencies have been partly the result of immediate circumstances, but in almost every instance they also reflect certain deeper, inherent features of present-day Soviet foreign policy.

In the first instance, "flexibility" is the hall-mark of Khrushchev's style. This flexibility takes shape in several ways. But most pertinent here is the tactic of alternating assertive and detente phases in the expectation that the West can be induced to yield positions peacefully through negotiations in a period of detente by virtue of the pressures that led up to it. Khrushchev's handling of the Berlin issue can be explained to an important degree in these terms.

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Beyond this contrived ambivalence, there is also a true inconsistency in Khrushchev's diplomacy which has been increasingly discernible in recent years. The implications of the nuclear age, the political isolation in which Stalin's rigid policies placed the USSR and the communist movement, and internal requirements of the Soviet regime, compelled Stalin's successors to develop a new look in foreign policy-- a strategy based on minimizing the risks of nuclear war, consolidation of Soviet holdings in Eastern Europe, a paternalistic alliance (where possible) with the forces of nationalism in the underdeveloped world, a generally gradualist approach to the goal of bringing communist parties to power, and more open and normal state relations between the West and the USSR.

On the other hand, the USSR's acquisition of a growing strategic strike force and increasing economic power have lent a new, assertive impulse to Soviet policies in recent years. Khrushchev maintains that the change in the world "correlation of forces" to the USSR's advantage should compel the West to recognize the "reality" of irrevocable communist rule in Eastern Europe, to "normalize" such anomalies as West Berlin and the unrecognized status of East Germany, and to refrain from "counter-revolution" (intervention) in the face of communist advances outside the bloc.

Both of these trends are compatible with the Soviet understanding of that elastic concept, peaceful coexistence. And Khrushchev would like to have the best of each. He seems to hope that by incessant though relatively unprovocative pressures (primarily political) he can consolidate and extend Soviet influence, particularly in the underdeveloped world. At the same time, he seems to hope that when these pressures do arouse adverse reactions, he can minimize the military risks (in relations with the US) and the political liabilities (in relations with nationalist neutral governments). But a harmonious blending of these approaches is not always possible, even in the day-to-day functioning of Soviet diplomacy. Over the long run, these two trends hold profoundly different implications for Soviet relations with the free world.

Finally, even deeper contradictions flow from the dual role the Soviet leaders play as rulers of the USSR and heads of the communist world. In the former role, their primary concerns are the security and the political-economic well-being of the Soviet state. But the impulses these concerns lend to Soviet policy often are circumscribed or nullified by the obligations and loyalties assumed by the USSR as center of the bloc and communist movement. This fact is most conspicuous in Soviet relations with Communist China, not only because of mutual obligations but because Peiping's challenge from

the left to Soviet leadership of the communist world imposes upon the Soviet leaders a need to prove their militancy if they are to hold the support of other communist parties. At the heart of the matter are the conflicting national interests of the USSR and Communist China (as defined by their communist rulers) and the difficulty of reconciling the divergent policies and views of these two communist superpowers in a political system based on the proposition that there is a single source of authority and truth.

Pressures arising out of the Sino-Soviet dispute have been an important consideration behind the assertiveness characterizing Soviet foreign policy over the past year. They may well influence Khrushchev's behavior at Vienna. Still, Communist China by no means has a veto-- whether direct or indirect-- over Soviet policies. In recent months, the USSR has continued to pursue policies which, in several specific instances, run directly counter to Chinese Communist interests.

This ambivalence is nowhere better illustrated than at the Geneva test ban negotiations. There is little doubt that Moscow's desire to inhibit Communist China's acquisition of nuclear weapons has been one important reason why the Soviets have seriously entertained the idea of a supervised nuclear test ban. And there is equally little doubt that Peiping's ambition to become a nuclear power is one important reason why the prospects for a test ban agreement have dimmed during the resumed session of the conference.

General Approach

Despite the agreement to keep the Vienna meeting informal, Khrushchev will regard these talks as far more important than a mere probing of President Kennedy's views. His own position convinces him of the importance of having the ear of the man in charge, and he will want to impress upon the President his views as to how US-Soviet relations, and the affairs of the world, should be governed. He probably will seek specific agreements, if only to prove to his own audience that his summit diplomacy pays off. And he will expect that the conference outcome-- both the particulars and the general atmosphere-- will set the pattern for the style of Soviet diplomacy for some months to come.

Khrushchev will come to Vienna in a confident mood, his confidence swelled by the events in Laos, in Cuba, and in outer space, and by the general growth of Soviet power. But it would be a mistake to overestimate this confidence. Khrushchev's vacillation

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over pressing the Berlin issue during the past year indicates an awareness of the potential dangers involved. He might well feel that a vigorous US response to a sharp Soviet challenge on Berlin would be more likely, not less so, in the wake of Cuba and Laos. There is also convincing evidence of Moscow's concern over its exposed position in Cuba, the growing US-Indian rapprochement, and increased US defense expenditures. In addition, Khrushchev has his own problems within the bloc-- with Communist China and Albania-- and internal problems as well.

During the talks, Khrushchev might, for effect, strike a note of anger and bluster-- particularly in response to strong language on sensitive issues. But it seems likely that he will generally assume an attitude of reasonable firmness, coupled with a pitch for improved US-Soviet relations.

Khrushchev would prefer that the talks end on a note of accord, that they convey the beginning of a new period of relaxed international tensions. (However, mindful of the Sino-Soviet polemics of last year, Khrushchev will not be prepared to go so far in this regard as he did following his talks with President Eisenhower.) In addition to other, more general, considerations which are cited above, he probably believes that a detente atmosphere would establish a political deterrent of sorts to forceful US action against Cuba, and against Laos in the event the current negotiations break down. He might also hope that this atmosphere would take some of the steam out of an expanding US arms program. And, while not essential, an atmosphere of US-Soviet accord would harmonize with the type of Party Program Khrushchev evidently plans to present at the CPSU Congress next October (which it is anticipated will emphasize consumer welfare, and ultimate communist victory through economic competition and peaceful coexistence).

Khrushchev might be prepared to make some conciliatory gestures for the sake of outward harmony; he might even have "saved up" some lesser concessions for this purpose. But his attachment to harmony will not be without conditions; it will depend to a large extent on the outcome of the talks on the major substantive issues.

Specific Issues

Berlin and Germany. Probably, Khrushchev's foremost aim will be to obtain some commitment to resume negotiations on Berlin and Germany. To buttress his position, he will probably reaffirm Soviet determination to conclude, if necessary, a separate treaty with the East Germans, and he will not refrain from generalized warnings about

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the consequences of such action. But he will stress the Soviet Union's desire to "solve" the Berlin question peacefully, through negotiations. Indeed, there is little doubt that negotiations represent Khrushchev's preferred approach. In the Soviet view, even a relatively limited negotiated agreement-- provided it left the door open for further Soviet action at some future date-- would be preferable to the uncertainties and potential dangers of unilateral Soviet action.

Khrushchev will restate the maximum Soviet position; the conclusion of a "two Germanies" peace treaty on the basis of which West Berlin would be converted into a "free city." If the discussions delve deeper into the substance of the Soviet demands, Khrushchev will probably outline a proposal along the lines of the May 9, 1960, aide memoire, that is, an "interim agreement" containing first-step limitations on Allied rights in West Berlin and designed as well to enhance the international status of the East German regime. He might soften some of these provisions in an effort to induce agreement on another round of negotiations.

It seems likely that Khrushchev will table a formal proposal for convening an East-West summit conference on Berlin and Germany. If Khrushchev meets with a categorical rejection of any further talks on Berlin, this will occasion an angry response which might well set the tone for the rest of the talks. Short of this, there would probably be considerable flexibility in Khrushchev's position. He would like to get a firm commitment to hold a conference this year; but he would be willing to settle for general agreement on a conference in the late fall of this year, after the Party Congress in October. Also, he would probably agree to expand the conference agenda to include other issues and he might not insist on holding the conference on the summit level. Khrushchev might even be satisfied with an equivocal US response to the proposal for a conference of this kind.

Disarmament and Security Matters. Khrushchev's approach to disarmament and related questions is less predictable. He will almost certainly dwell on these matters at some length, intending to set the stage for the forthcoming US-Soviet bilateral talks on disarmament. He will maintain that the bilateral talks should deal with matters of substance and not just procedure. He will stress, probably with real conviction, the need for disarmament and for the US and Soviet Union to make every effort to avoid a nuclear war. He will also express what is probably a genuine concern over the possible proliferation of nuclear weapons, and the burdens of the arms race. He may use the occasion of privacy to indicate misgivings about Communist China's emergence as a nuclear power.

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But the specifics of Khrushchev's future position are not clear. Regarding Moscow's current tactics at the nuclear test ban talks it is unclear whether they are designed merely to strengthen its bargaining position, or represent a firm decision not to conclude a separate agreement on a test ban. Very likely there is some indecision in the current Soviet attitude. If the Soviets have decided against a test ban treaty, it is doubtful that Khrushchev will so indicate directly during the Vienna meeting; he would prefer to have the US assume the onus of breaking off the test ban talks. (There are indications, however, that Khrushchev might argue that a test ban agreement, because of the extensive inspection requirements of the US and UK, will have to be related in some fashion to an agreement or negotiations on broader disarmament issues.) But if this decision has not been made, he may hope to bargain with the President over some of the remaining unresolved differences. In this case, he might agree to modify the Soviet demand for a three-man directorate; there is some evidence that the Soviet delegation to the test ban talks wishes to do so.

In discussing general disarmament, Khrushchev will try to impress upon the President the virtue of the Soviet single-treaty approach to "general and complete disarmament." He may stick rigidly to the Soviet position that this approach must be the basis for any resumed negotiations on general disarmament. But he may wish to sound out the President about the possibility of negotiations on what he must realize to be a more realistic disarmament package proposal, particularly one geared to the 'Nth country' problem. Such a proposal could take the form of a separately negotiable "first-stage" agreement linked in only a declaratory sense to the goal of general and complete disarmament. Or, the Soviets might propose that negotiations on complete disarmament be conducted parallel with talks on other proposals. In any event, Khrushchev would probably be interested in hearing whatever new ideas the US may have concerning measures to check the spread of nuclear weapons.

Peaceful Coexistence. In this first encounter with the President, Khrushchev should be particularly disposed to expound the Soviet philosophy on East-West relations. This will include, at a minimum, the standard line on peaceful coexistence: that the existence of two world systems is an established fact; that these two systems must resolve their differences and prove which is superior through peaceful, economic means, and not by wars between states; that there can be no interference in the affairs of another state (i.e., the West must respect the authority of established communist regimes); but that there can be no cessation of the ideological struggle (i.e., communist subversion), as this is an objective law of history transcending the level of relations between states.

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But Khrushchev will go beyond this familiar dialectical rationalization of imperialist intent and self-survival in the nuclear age. He will wish to establish the thesis that the US must draw appropriate conclusions from the growth of Soviet power. In particular, he will maintain that the West's acceptance of the permanence and legitimacy of the satellite regimes of Eastern Europe is a sine qua non of tranquil East-West relations. He will present parallel arguments for a "solution" of the West Berlin problem.

Khrushchev may not choose to bring up the question of Cuba, but if he does, he will probably raise it in connection with these connotations of peaceful coexistence. If so, he will warn the President of the dangers to peace involved in armed intervention in Cuba. But Khrushchev will be careful to avoid any embarrassing, specific commitment to render Castro all-out military support. Instead, he will take the line presented in his letter of April 22 that US intervention in Cuba could justifiably, and might well, provoke similar action by the USSR along its periphery. Realizing Soviet inability to give Castro's Cuba effective military support short of running grave risks of nuclear war (which in the final analysis he would have no intention of doing), Khrushchev will concentrate on maximizing the political prize for any overt US action.

Khrushchev will probably maintain that as another consequence of the growth of Soviet power, the communist bloc should have a voice equal to that of the West in international councils. The question of the USSR's "troika" proposal for administering international organizations will inevitably arise in this connection, or in connection with the test ban talks. Khrushchev might vociferously voice his determination to press this proposal until it is fully accepted. But it would be a mistake to assume that the Soviet position on this question is immovable. The Soviets almost certainly expect this fight to be lengthy-- one that will require compromises along the road if it is to be successful. And they will be prepared in the end to abandon their extreme demand if they become convinced that it will antagonize rather than win the neutralists to their side. To date, the Soviets have been notably unsuccessful in securing neutralist support-- which is essential-- for this proposal.

Laos. Apart from probable cautions concerning the consequences of SEATO intervention in Laos, any points Khrushchev chooses to raise regarding the Laotian situation will be conditioned by the course of negotiations in Geneva and Ban Namone. (?) For this reason, an estimate now of Khrushchev's position on this major issue is particularly imprudent.

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There is a possibility that Khrushchev might concede one or two non-essential points on the Laotian question (the Soviets have a fair amount of leeway) if he were pressed and felt that such concessions would promote an amicable outcome of the Vienna conference.

Other Issues. On his own initiative, or in response to US initiatives regarding other US-Soviet bilateral issues, Khrushchev might well raise the various standing Soviet proposals for expanded economic relations-- in particular, the extension of US credits and most-favored-nation treatment to the USSR.

Unless the talks take an acrimonious turn, Khrushchev might seek to promote an atmosphere of accord by making some conciliatory gesture on a lesser issue. He might agree to a US initiative on bilateral relations, retool some earlier US proposal on bilateral cooperation in scientific or medical endeavors (though probably not in the exploration of outer space), or invite President Kennedy to visit the Soviet Union (though the CPSU Congress and the Berlin question would pose vexing problems of timing to Khrushchev).

Finally, with the eyes of the world on Vienna, Khrushchev might regard the meeting as an appropriate occasion for some dramatic step intended to demonstrate Soviet progress or peaceful intent. This might mean a new space shot; and it is another reason for some Soviet initiative in the field of disarmament.

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